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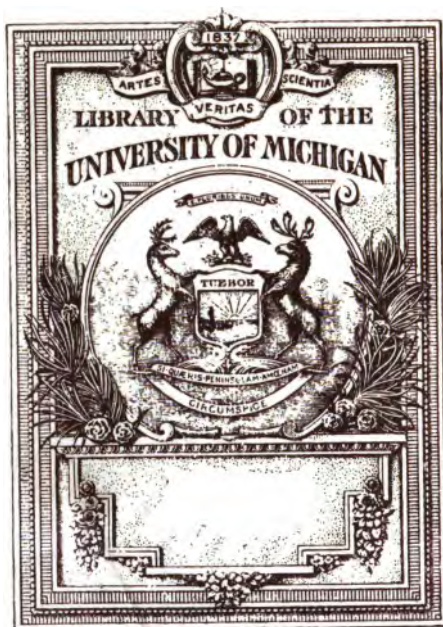
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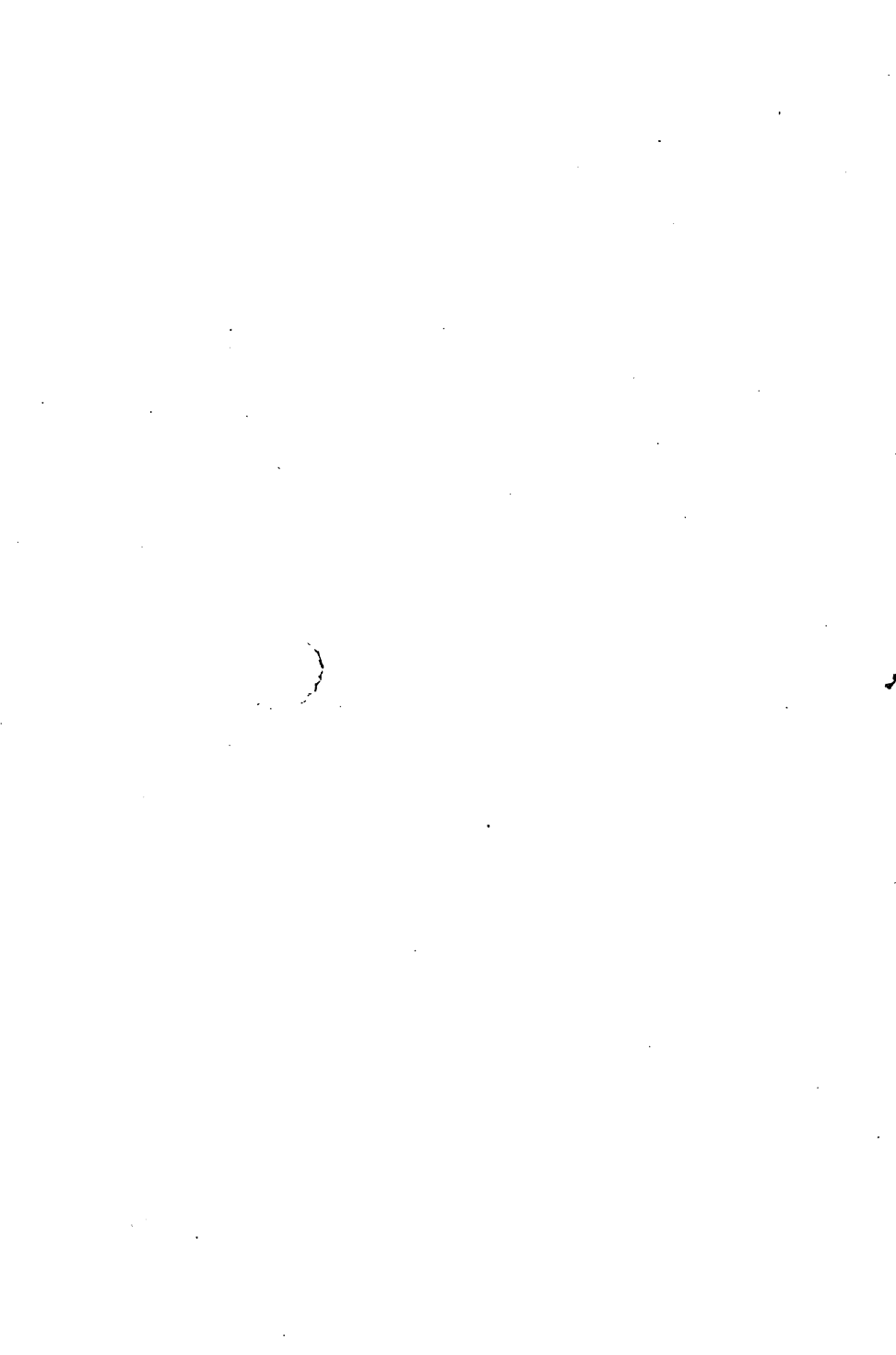
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ST. GERVAIS
and other poems



ST. GERVAIS

AND OTHER POEMS



by
**CARGILL
SPRIETSMA**

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**TO
MY MOTHER**

372991



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acknowledged.*



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DECEMBER 27

TO *THEE*, my mother, who ever art
My love, my all,
I consecrate what in my heart
Is free from worldly-bitter gall:
Whate'er befall,
Whate'er the sins that would enthrall,
Ill fortune, or ill health,
Or should the lotus flower, wealth,
Benumb me, make me small
In spirit, do thou my aim recall—
Forsake thou not thy son—
Life's course is quickly run:
For thee, 'twas so bitter brief,
And I in hours of grief
Have oft ungrateful been,
And weakly bowed to sin.
O let me not again
Be sad, nor thy great sacrifice forget.



And when small fortunes fret
My spirit, come thou to me
With love and tender care,
That I may bear
The course which lies before:
And do thou one thing more—
Make me thus strong that I may go
Beyond each obstacle, that no
Rebuke of pain may find me weak
To fall before the end I seek,
O make me strong to live the years that should be thine
But thou didst die to make them mine.



**AMERICA:
A SONG FOR OUR GENERATION**

WHEN through me coursed the first young
Passion blood,
Which swelled the heart and sent its flood
Of wild emotion through the pulse, and its wild fire
Within me kindled all my being to desire—
Gave me Heavenly vistas in the night,
And filled me with sensations of delight,
Thy stern call came
To take me from my dreams of love and fame,
I answered, and for thy name
I gave my youth.

Though in those youthful days I did not heed
The morrow, but followed with that speed
With which the blood of youth coursed through me,
From flight to flight, and with small thought of thee—
Though thou didst take from me those days
When skies were always bright, when rays
Of sunshine filled the perfumed air,
And love made life forever fair—



St. Gervais and Other Poems

When came thy call, youth faltered not,
But chose itself the sterner lot—
And love itself thine altar sought,
Its consecrated sacrifice unto thee brought.
And now that I have given my youth to thee,
Which gods alone may give and still retain,
And now that I stand firm and free
To choose and love again—
I hear thy call.

'Tis not the call that asks for life,
Not the martial call of drum and fife
Calling me to follow on.
The glories of those days are gone,
When foes whose banners we could read,
Upon thine unstained land would tread.
'Tis not the call to martial toil,
Nor fighting on an alien soil,
'Tis not the chance that vict'ry gained,
Returning with thy flag unstained,
Fair love will take the laurel wreath,
And smilingly on victor breathe—



For whilst we fight, fair love is changed,
And lovers' hearts become estranged;
Fair youth is gone down to its grave,
Though I may for its love-joys crave,
And now I know when next I give,
My love again may never live—
Yet give I all, to thee my land,
Here is my life, thine to command.

I hear thy call,
Whilst traitors rob thee of thine all
Which lives of heroes bought
For thee, who traitors fought
On alien soil.
Red-handed would they spoil
Thee of thy virgin head,
Whilst they lie dead
Who would not see thee stained!
Who has the victory gained
If those besmirching hands may fondle thee,
And call thee mine? Rather would I die than see
Their gifts with gaudy glare
Upon thy naked bosom blare—



St. Gervais and Other Poems

To see thee trucked to trade,
And beauty from thy figure fade,
Now yielding thy pure self to those
Who shirked thy call and idly chose
To court thee whilst thy lover died—

O be not like the maid who cried
One morning when her lover fell,
But rival wed ere chapel bell
Had tolled the funeral hour.

Thou call'st to free thee from the grasp
Of that foul arm which now doth clasp
Thee in its deadly brace;
Awaken, view in truth the face
Of that strange monster who as friend
But seeks destruction as thine end:
Thou hast been weak, no more,
And still art strong, thy store
Of faith in those who died
Must be thy strength, for they relied
On thee to chastise all
Who answered not their country's call.



How shalt thou know the strangling fist,
How canst thou his strength resist
Whose garb is that of friend,
How canst thou know he seeks thine end,
Who makes thee gifts of beaten gold,
And stands and sees thy virtue sold?

O hast thou seen the water snake,
What wondrous grace its movements take
When moonbeams shimmer on its slime,
And change to jewels its filthy grime?

Thy call I hear is not the call
That bids me in the battle fall,
A sob I hear, a plaintive cry,
And not the captain's call, "Stand by",—
'Tis not the call to shoulder arms,
'Tis not attended with the charms
Of sad farewells and ostentatious tears
Displayed by those whose selfish fears
Creep out when called to sacrifice.
Yet is thy call as clear,
Not this year,
Nor the next will be the end;





St. Gervais and Other Poems

For those who will thy flag defend,
Must answer not today alone,
Nor will a single deed their debt to thee atone—
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, that thou mayest live,
To thee my love and life I give.





VENEZIA

O *RIDE* with me again into that still lagoon,
Beneath a star-filled Heaven,
Beneath a lowering moon,
By zephyrs driven.

O rest with me beneath the canopy
Which shields us from the light,
Aimless as a butterfly
In fantastic flight.

O drink with me the silent air
In sweet repose,
Whilst, banishing despair,
Our eyelids close.

Then, when a voice so clear
Comes from the deep,
Love song of gondolier
Waft us to sleep.



GONDOLIER'S SONG

LOVE at my feet lies a-dreaming,
Guarded by spirits of old,
Moon, moon ever beaming,
Turning the ocean to gold,
Lighten these waters for fairies,
Who come from the jewel-laden sea,
And quicken the tide which carries
My own love back to me.



ECHOES

O *BROTHER*, hold it 'gainst your ear,
See what pretty song you hear—
O brother, I wish that you would tell
What makes the singing in the shell."

I answered, "'Tis the sea",
But quickly, she,
"It sings so softly now to me,
O surely brother, could it be
The angry sea?"
I answered, "'Tis the sea-nymph's melody".

I placed the shell against my ear,
And heard a pleasant, soothing strain,
I drew my darling near to hear
The echoes of each soft refrain.

There were echoed songs unsung
To ordinary ears,



St. Gervais and Other Poems

A harp upon a cedar hung
A thousand years.

And then we cast away the shell
Upon the crest of breaking wave,
Into the foam the songster fell,
And to the sea its music gave.

That was years ago, and oft
I've longed to hear again
The voice so low, so sweet, so soft,
That throbbed through every short refrain:

That waked in me my sluggish blood,
That gave me voice that I might sing,
That sent me on a surging flood
To Her my songs to bring.

Full many years I waited, dumb,
I searched each shell along the sea,
And now at last my song has come,
O may I sing for thee?



NERO

O *F MY* own volition what am I,
But a cursing thief, a beast in a sty,
But a dream betrayed,
And a death delayed
By a burning lust that will not die?

What am I when my will is freed,
And bound by none but its own false creed?
My lust reveals
What my word conceals
To the world whose approval I heed:

What am I when my friends are gone,
And I am a law to myself alone,
With nothing to heed
But passions which lead
Me to pleasures of lust ripely grown?



St. Gervais and Other Poems

Most ancient of rites, O lascivious sights,
O indulgence of secret delights,
Now heated by wine,
Unhampered by time,
I revel in clandestine nights.

This is my life which you cannot see,
This is the life that my mind which is free,
Builds at its ease,
My lust to appease,
And ever is mistress for me.



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

I.

THREE months—almost four—
Oh, more than four since that last hour
When thou didst speak to me—
Oh, how I miss thee—the quay
From where I now observe the sea
In vain—in vain, there is no joy for me.



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

II.

An Aspiration

Before departure for France, Spring, 1918

WE *WHO* never prayed before
Have learned to pray,
We who never thought of more
Than pleasure for a day,
Who never looked so far away
Into the future as to hope,
But chose to grope
Along in darkness
Year by year,
Are hoping now!
We have learned to seek,
With eagerness, unrest,
For things of which to speak
Before, was but to jest.



Oh, how the hearts of those must ache,
Whose loud and unheard cries
Have risen—"For Christ's sake
End the war"; a nation dies,
And still the cry goes on—
If twelve months from this day
We too are gone,
God spare the souls, we pray,
Who this day cry to Thee,
Along with all who blindly
Now have died.
We go, impelled by hope
That from the darkness where we grope
The world will find
A purer kind
Of love.

The wish for fleeting pleasure now is gone,
The hope for happiness has come,
The days and months of hardening life,
The coming of the day of strife



That makes the whole world wet
With blood, has taught us not regret
For what is past, but hope!
Oh, if we ne'er return
To those dear hearts at home,
If those warm hearts which yearn
Must travel on alone
To this life's end—
Remember this kind friend—
The prayers and hopes of hearts
At war, are not for blood,
But that the years of peace will bring
Those things to which our hearts now cling,
That those who follow us may know
That we must reap from seeds we sow,
And hope that those in after years
Will reap fair flowers from the tears
That fall upon our graves.



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

III

The Glory of the Sea

For L. P. H.—April, 1918.

After gun practice by convoy on the Atlantic

MAN

A *HEART* by sudden death and loss
Of loved one in the strife
Is tortured, though it bear the cross,
The beauty of the life
Which grew from love once nurturing there
Is scarred by pangs of sharp despair,
Though faith lives on that days will be
When wordly vales are passed,
The fond belief that both shall see
A perfect love at last—
Upon that life remains a scar
Which was not there before the war.

O nothing from the fate of change is free,
But the living glory of the sea—
The beauty of the sea, sea, sea.



THE EARTH

A *QUIET* vale by cannon's blast
Is rent in hideous shapes,
Nor the bordering mountain pinnacles vast
The scarring hand escapes,
E'en all that grows and lives on land
Must suffer from the Vandal's hand,
And though a beauty soon shall grow
Upon the bloody field,
And once again the vale shall know
A peaceful, fruitful yield,
Yet on the scene will be a scar
Which was not there before the war.

O nothing from the fate of change is free,
But the living glory of the sea,
The beauty of the sea, sea, sea.



THE SEA

FOR I have seen the shattering shell
Burst ope the waters deep,
In flame as from the gates of Hell
The ocean's contents steep,
But the sparkling sea rolled as before
And never waned in its glorious roar;
Not suffering from destruction's hands,
Its beauties never wane—
It changeability withstands,
Yet never is the same:
Each old sea had its beauty old,
In each new sea, the old behold!

O nothing from the fate of change is free,
But the living glory of the sea,
The beauty of the sea, sea, sea.



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

IV

Flowers of the Fields of France

F^IELDS of France, I thought that I should look
in vain

To find your beauty, when I came
To view the ground where bloody death had been,
And men in pain and agony had lain.

In vain, for hard and frozen clods had made
A weary ground, which to the spade
Would hardly yield a resting place, a grave
Where shattered, tortured heroes might be laid.

But now I know that those who lie within your fold
Are resting there, the mould
Of Beauty is not lost, for I behold
Their forms come from your clods so cold.



The ashen gray which I beheld upon their lips
Is gone: the dew of morning drips
From off their cheeks, flits
Now and darts the bee, and honey sips.

All the Winter—there are many dead—
Those braves who all the charges led,
Though wounded ceased not; with wounds which bled
Still hotly fought until the fierce foe fled.

This glorious Spring their beauty now reveals,
Not now a barren sod conceals
Their glory, but aloud, aloud it peals
The beauty of their lives in rapturous fields.



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

V

A Memory of Compline, aboard a train from Blois to
Somewhere, France, hour of Compline, May, 1918.

I *WONDER* if the stars above the chapel shine,
I wonder if the clock is tolling nine,
And earnest men from studies turning now to prayer
Before the crucifix upon the altar there
At compline in the Lady Chapel of Racine—

I wonder if they heard the echo of the call
That came to us so clearly from the pall
Which shrouds a million silent sorrows over sea,
I wonder, would they hear a call from me
At compline in the Lady Chapel of Racine—

Or do they night by night in solemn chorus chant,
In dignity their daily sins repent,
And pray once more that God Gomorrah spare,
And we their joys of righteous may share,
At compline in the Lady Chapel of Racine?



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

VI

Along Le Quai des Chartrons—An Old Tar

OVER the wall its tall masts rise
Up as if to meet the skies—
I recall one night, it seemed to me
A glorious sight along the quay
To see them, and hear a tale from the wizened tar
Who had manned the ship through all the war,
Regardless of the lurking fate
Which many a free lance days of late
Had reckoned with a drunken smile,
Had ventured as in days of yore
With a cargo bound for a southern shore,
Telling his last wild tale of the sea
While leaning here on the wall of the quay.

There was a mark of life to the days,
A fascination to the old tar's ways,
I loved the strange bohemian dress,
I loved the sound of the wave's caress
Against his schooner's bulk—



St. Gervais and Other Poems

I loved the hag who used to skulk
As a cur along the great long pier,
I loved the woman with cart so queer
Who used to pass each twilight hour,
I loved the lighthouse on the breakers' edge,
For it cast a shadow on the ledge
Which through the day was a barren rock
And the wildest sea would only mock.

I loved the seaman's tavern too,
Where the thirsty captain and all the crew
Spent the latest hours of leave ashore,
There I gathered the tales of seaman's lore,
And took a pleasure and strange delight
In the dance of the tar's drunken dame at night,
I heard the strains from the pimp's guitar,
I mixed with the crowd that shirked the war,
I drank a strong and bitter brew,
I cursed and sang as one of the crew,
And then I left them to their brawl,
Through the rain, or the fog, at last to crawl
Between my blankets in the early dawn,
Humming the refrain of their latest song.



But now I lean on the wall of the quay,
The old Chartron has no life for me,
Below me there along the walk,
Different tars and different talk,
The dance and the brawl,
The masts towering tall—
The waves, and the darkness covering all—

Only the lighthouse there far away,
And the cruel pointed rocks so barren by day—
Only there now is mystery, hidden and black,
Which all life about me now seems to lack,
These haunts now are hateful—the old tar is gone,
And I labor here, living alone—
It was not for the sake of the brawl and the crew,
It was not for anything then which I knew,
But something which drew me—it happened to be here,
Where I saw all these sights amusing and queer—
They are horrible now, they are hateful to me,
As I lean on the wall which borders the quay.



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

VII

St. Gervais

Lines written on Good Friday, 1919 in Paris.

St. Gervais is the church in Paris, hit by a shell from the German long range gun on Good Friday, 1918, when almost a hundred of those worshipping there were killed or wounded. C. S.

1.

A YEAR ago
In silence knelt a feeble mother here
Upon the stones of St. Gervais;
In silence
Through the forty days of Passion,
Prayer had followed prayer
To Him Who would not hear.

Now there upon that bare, cold stone
She knelt, to ask once more
The end of all the brutal infamy
Which like a plague had swept
This earth of youth.



And there she prayed that truth
Might soon be victor,
And that her lost blood,
The sacrifice upon a recent field,
Should not have been in vain.
She prayed in silence for the son
Now, and for the righteous cause.
Again she crossed herself—
Her daily prayer had gone to Him
Who never seemed to hear.

Then the service of the afternoon began,
And when she there recalled
The passion of her Lord,
She wept,
And a warm tear
Dried on her withered cheek,
Once again she knelt
And prayed, not for her son,
But for the end of all the wrong
Which threatened all the world.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

"O take, dear Lord,
The sacrifice of blood;
To us who live, be harsh, be cruel,
But spare the generations from the chains
Of serfdom's iron yoke.
O take, take all our blood—
We offer all—
Here we, too old to die,
Before Thy cross in supplication lie."

And she, whose blood was thin,
Too thin to heat the hands
So cold that when they touched the stones
Which long had pressed the faithful knees,
Felt not the contact
But the firm resistance only—
The prayer still coming from her soul—
To that firm refuge
She had come each day,
And when the siren or a bursting shell
Had warned her of the dreadful hour
Of death,
She did not cower,
But safely rested near the cross.



It was a frightful silence
Which had awed the hour
Of prayer in St. Gervais,
And each lone soul
In silence made its prayer,
With only God to hear.
The sombre light through ancient glass
Gave benediction,
And to the lonesome soul
An angel seemed to hover
Round them all,
As if to search each soul
To give it strength for one last trial.
To all it seemed that
He would hear this day
Their prayer for victory of the right,
And in the prayer of passion
They all knelt.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

From the mother
Came the soul out-pouring prayer,
And as she bent to touch the very stones
With her gray head,
That angel came from out the mystic light,
Its voice so pure
And filled with Heavenly harmony—
It dazed her,
She felt the strange sensation of a shock—
A numbness,
Such as soldiers from a wound
And loss of blood feel in exhaustion,
When the power of will gives way
To loss of sense,—as he who eats
And lives on opium has a dream,
So this old soul
So strangely heard, and felt
The angel,
And the form from out the silence
And the mystic light
Bore her away
From St. Gervais.



And now thou art at rest,
O in thy sleep be blest,
And look upon this service in relief,
And see the scars, and count the grief
Of hearts that come into this shrine,
The shrine made doubly sacred by the glory which is
 thine,
To die as nobly as thy son for whom thou prayed
To give thy life, though from the battle stayed
By age and by the mission of thy sex.

Thou wert taken, trusting in the God Who took thee
Kneeling at His door, thou didst not see
Nor hear the insane crash of steel
That shook the stern foundations—made them reel,
And shattered all the ancient art to naught
Which pious souls laboriously brought
And dedicated year by year,
'Twas well thou didst not hear,
But swooned thus in thy prayer.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

To us who kneel where thou wouldst kneel today,
If thou wert here, to us who say
In unison a prayer—a solemn Evensong—
Who chant, and bid Him to redress the wrong—
To us are left the scars on ancient wood and stone,
Left by the ragged steel, the pieces flown
In countless wild directions in mad haste
To find thy vitals, there to taste
The blood of innocence, and halt thy prayer.

But that hot steel had come too late
To halt thy prayer for right, which Fate
Had carried to the ears of Him Who heard,
Insults, death, destruction, His Own Word
Defiled, and sacred ground with rape
And bloodshed stained,—to us 'tis left to shape
The Charter of Prevention, and the scars
Which on the stones and wooden bars
Of St. Gervais shall e'er remain, cry out, "Beware".



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

VIII

Thou Wilt Come No More

A memory of Pontanezon Barracks, Brest, France

D^{EAD!}
And nothing left me but thy name
Carved on this rude old door.

Dead!

Thou didst carve it here the night we came
To sleep on this caserne floor.

O the thirteen days on a deck of slime,
O the horde of men and the stench of grime,
O the thirteen nights 'neath the water line—
Thou dead—and the memory mine.

Dead!

And I am resting here again
Upon this caserne floor.

Dead!

But I am going home again
Where thou wilt come no more.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

For thou art dust, and I a living thing
With memory, which to the past must cling,
And see the painful moment e'er
Which made thee dust, and me to bear
This moment here alone.

Dark the night, and high the April sea,
Cold the rain, but warm there near to thee;
Far warmer, for my heart was warm
There 'neath our blanket arm in arm
With thee, than here alone.

The crash of the submarine rings in my ears,
The blow of steel will resound through the years,
My memory wakening with dread,—
For thou, then with me, now art dead—
Oh, it is fearsome here alone.

Risked how often thy life for me,
Death thou didst not fear; I see
The day of June when thou didst lead
Us through the wire, nor wound didst heed.



Not for thy death ought I to feel
This awful anguish, thou didst seal
With death a friendship, with disdain,
Death was no stranger when he came.

That first night in this strange land,
'Twas good to rest and hold thy hand,
Under the same rough roof to lie
And talk—of death to wonder why.

The rats and vermin,—these were naught,
'Twas for our loves and homes we fought,
As I shared the warmth of thy earthly home,
Why am I here to return alone!

Dead!

And nothing left me but thy name
Carved on this rude old door.

Dead!

Thou didst carve it here the night we came
To sleep on this caserne floor.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

O the days in a trench full of men who could move
With the pain which only death could soothe,
O the nights under ground 'neath the firing line—
Thou dead—and the memory mine.

Dead!

And I am resting here again
Upon this caserne floor.

Dead!

And they are sending me home again—
Oh, wilt thou come no more?



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

IX

The Cross

A small cross was all that remained to the young man by which he could remember his dearest friend who, after having lost both legs and an arm, in the Argonne, died in the young man's arms. C. S.

MUST I part with it now?
It was warm as thy breast
Where it hung, and my vow
This to wear did attest
Our loves; O thy dying wish,
Feebly uttered through thy pain,
Overcoming that anguish,
Knowing that thou hadst been slain—
Clinging with thy single arm,
Whilst I laid thee low,
Whilst thy blood, warm,
Deathly blood, did hotly flow
From thy wounded side,
Side which only death could heal,
Wound which steel had opened wide;
Piercing, maiming, shredding steel!



St. Gervais and Other Poems

How can I speak of that red sight,
How can I to thy mother give
The pain of that benumbing fright
Which made me dread to see thee live?
Must I part with this small cross
Which hung upon thy breast?
Breast grown cold with fevered loss
Of spiriting blood from wounds undressed!
Oh, such wounds as men received
In the fearless days we saw,
Oh, such loss as now bereaved,
Holds me still with silent awe—
Horror of the crazing sight,
When I laid thee thus possessed
Of fitful strength, unhuman might,
Half dead, to tear this from thy breast!
Thy mother's right is right of birth,
Is right that comes from bearing pain,
My right is right that comes when earth
Turns back a man to dust again,
And takes from him in greater pain
The life his mother made him live,



If by suffering men do gain
Their claim on life, death this did give,
The right to give thy love to me,
And giving love, this token blest,
With which lives my thought of thee—
It shall rest here as on thy breast,
The token is to her less gain,
Who suffered but a distant loss,
Who saw not how in all thy pain,
Thou gavest to me this sacred cross.



ROSEMARY FOR REMEMBRANCE

X

To a Flower from La Tranchée Rouget

'**T**WAS for my Love I gathered thee,
Near the bend in La Tranchée Rouget;
The only life on the field to greet me,
Where the dead in their own blood lay.

I thought of the hour when I would give thee,
To my Love who was far away;
I thought of the day when my Love would greet me—
How I longed for my Love that day!

'Twere better, dear flower, that thou hadst grown,
On my grave in that fertile field;
Far rather I'd died there than here to have known,
My loss that must e'er be concealed.



AT BAUSART

For H. W.

WHAT yawns so pitifully with open mouth,
What apparition from afar
Comes toward me with its mien uncouth,
From out the graveyard of Bausart?

It bears no uniform to tell
'Tis one who in the battle died,
No Greenback from the abodes of Hell,
Or blue of Poilu sanctified.

It moves, comes onward, now retreats,
Comes forward once again,
What is the instrument which beats
And moans this ephemeral strain?

O none but warriors here have died,
And they in death their colors wear,
Nor do they to the quick confide
Such pain as that which walketh there.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

For they who thus their debt have paid,
But welcome death as sweet relief,
And as they in the earth are laid,
Rest there and leave behind their grief.

Nor do they walk this painful ground
As this unrestful, ghastly form,
The earth receives them in her womb
As mother holds her child from harm.

O cease thy moving, stop that strain,
O leave these warriors to their rest,
And mock not with thy show of pain,
Which women moves but men detest.

"Oh, I am doomed to walk in pain,
And hover o'er my opened grave,
Until my bones be placed again,
Within this hole by warrior brave.

For until then the soul so foul,
Which tore me from my rightful grave,
Now lies therein whilst my purged soul,
Must burn and be his guardian slave."



"'Tis not for me to find thy bones,
Collect the atoms scattered wide,
'Tis for a million lazy drones
To scour the town and country-side."

And then the thing gave such a wail,
I thought that all the dead had moaned,
O what could thus this thing assail—
I thought the thousand dead had groaned.

And through the dark on hands and knees,
I neared the desecrated grave,
To search uprooted rocks and trees,
This spectre's blasted bones to save.

And thus to search this cavern vast,
To find a million specks of bone,
Amid the ruin where the blast
Mixed these decayed remains with stone.

And all the time above my head,
There was a sound as of a bat,
Against the walls which house the dead,
Or grating noise of gnawing rat.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

So I labored through the night,
Where once I'd fought and tempted shell,
I pondered on this horrid rite
Of saving unearthed folks from Hell.

And when from out the fields around,
I'd gathered skull and rotten bones
To place them in the open ground,
The spectre stopped me with his groans.

"These bones alone will not suffice,
For I must with them buried be,
The earth my being doth entice,
Now throw me in and bury me."

I know the fear that holds the heart
When one walks hand in hand with death,
When death is playing the reaper's part,
And one can feel its icy breath.

When one must fix his bayonet,
And charge a man at body's length,
When loss to act leaves not regret,
But death from steel and murdering strength.



I know the night the shells fell here,
And opened all the graves which threw
Their contents to the hills, whilst fear
Of unearthed ghosts within me grew.

To charge a man, that I can do,
To fix a bayonet and strike,
But hold a ghost—would't break in two?
I know not what this thing be like.

Approach it or await its form—
How should I bury a living soul?
Yet was this living phantom torn
From out this open, gaping hole.

Bones I see, and bones can bury,
Flesh can rot, and souls depart,
"Phantom fleet, O phantom, hurry,
Tell me of what stuff thou art!

For thy bones lie there before thee,
And thy flesh has fattened worms,
Art thou spirit, soul, or body,
Takes the soul such hideous forms?"



St. Gervais and Other Poems

Then I rose up from my knees,
Shrinking from the dread reply,
Looking for such things one sees
In a dead man's glassy eye.

But the air was clear and pure,
Still the night and calm as clear,
Not an owl my wits to lure,
Nor open grave which had been here.



ERIKA—AFTER A PAINTING

SWEET daughter of an artist's soul,
Free from sin that makes me foul,
Born of brush and genius' skill,
Of feverish heart and fixed will,
Born of pain as I was born—
Thou from the painter's heart wast torn,
Wherein he felt the fire of love
Which God had sent him from Above,
And thus from mankind's sin wast freed,
In purest love to be conceived.

But still, thou art not his alone,
Who gave thee outward life,—not bone
And flesh art thou, that with the day
Of birth begins its slow decay;
A soul art thou that never dies,
'Tis that which liveth in thine eyes,
And speaks the master's passion there,
His love, his life, his soul laid bare,—
Breathed into thee through him, thou too
From God's great living spirit grew.



THE FALLEN GOD—Nov. 1-11, 1918

SEVEN cold November days have ta'en their
deathly toll,
Seven nights with seven days a bloody story tell,
South from Stenay o'er wooded hill and plain, there
hourly roll
Our light and heavy cannon between the Meuse and
the Moselle.

Forty-four times thirty thousand men are falling back,
Forty-four times thirty thousand wills have broken
down,
A million seasoned criminals have sickened from
attack;
Who came with royal purple robes retreats with
shadowy crown.

A half a million of our hearts are set
Toward firm and purposed end,
The odds which thus beset them only whet
Their iron mettle, obstacles but lend
An extra strength to the blow
Now fated heavily to fall,
The justice these four years so slow
To enter in the fray, will all
The losing millions coldly judge.



Two days the half a million speed
From gain to gain, and Inor heights
Are occupied, the roads which lead
Beyond now witness ghastly sights,
Those tales but few will tell; who see
Die in the seeing, or hiding in the day,
Take cover and use the night to flee
From cannonade and youths who lay
In wait for them with bayonet.

Nine days the horde has vainly fought to stem the
fateful tide,
Which as a raging sea o'erwhelms the broken ship,
in blood
Of their own sin now drags them down, held back in
meadow wide,
The white and dusty limestone stained is now a
crimson mud.

Far off into the land which lies north west of favored
Gaul,
A fallen god who leads the losing hordes now prays
to be,
His royal robes envelope him like a crimson shadowy
pall,
He turns to be the vanguard of the curséd hordes
which flee.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

Now dawns the fateful day,
In vain the broken wills of men
Too deeply steeped in sin, at Stenay
Seek to check our youths, but pain
Of death or maiming steel but swells
The blood within their veins, and hearts
But beat the quicker, and the foe compels
To turn, or writhe in pain until all life departs
And leaves a mangled corpse.
Night comes, a crossing of the Meuse,
Our youths near Pouilly and Mouzon,
With bayonets well fixed, now use
The weapon of their choice; upon
The heights of Inor remain
Our few battalions hurling alien shell
Upon the foe, they gain, they gain,
With pain deliver pain, to Hell
They send the broken hordes.

How slowly moves a silhouette retreating from the
west,
How heavy hangs upon it now the black November
cloud,
How slowly creeps it o'er the earth, and from its
drooping crest,
How loosely hang the garments, how like a spectre's
shroud.



There is no martial music here such as some ghosts
attend,
When in the night they hover o'er a field where men
lie slain,
The dark which falls upon this man alone can him
defend
From dead men's hands which 'gainst him rise from
out the fields of pain.

There is a muffled cannonade beats for his steps,
"retreat",
The guns their beating will not cease until a weary
horde
Has crawled as now this silhouette crawls, sinks
down on weary feet,
Drops down from weight of crimson sin, begs mercy
from the Lord.

But in the west,
On youthful brow now gather salty beads,
Rags hang in tatters, from the wear
And tear of ragged work, youth speeds
The sending of the shells that tear
In just pursuit of him who flees;
Not here the sneaking step of coward foot,
Nor in its eyes the look of him who sees
Within himself the soul-condemning root



St. Gervais and Other Poems

Of evil deeds. Youth strains, it lifts the shell
Into its place—a signal and a flash,
And sound which follows quickly after light to tell
That death again has sped into yon calculated space;
Now rocks the very air which shocks the chords
And looses all the muscles of the spine—it marks
the pace
Of that now shadowy form which is the vanguard of
the hordes
In their retreat.

Into the night the spectre makes its way, O kindly
night,
Since to be black to blackened souls is reckoned kind,
kind
Art thou to hide him from the sight of Heaven, to
shield him from its light,
To bring upon him blackness of a cloud and stormy
wind.

For thus from all the light of nature held away, the
fire
Which burns within his blackened soul may now
burn doubly bright,
And light the smallest corner of his heart, to see the
mire
Within himself—how kind it is to take from him all
natural light.



But guns roar,
And shells pour
Their storm of bursting steel,
While behind this wretched man come others of his
clan,

And night grows weary of its blackness; breaking day
Wears a sickly gray upon its fevered lip, with wan
And nauseous cheek lets the hordes in darkness go
their way,
While guns roar,
And shells pour
Their storm of bursting steel.

He flees—not from the hangman—such fate alone
becomes the man
Who does foul murder, and no more; he flees, he
knows not where,
Into the darkness, to find a pit where no more light can
Ever enter in—what joy and blessing would be there.

Perhaps he flees from that dread hour which now
draws swiftly nigh,
From that dread day when his defeat brings on his
fated doom,
The loss to him of power with which he sent men
forth to die,
Perhaps this settles on his heart a melancholy gloom.



St. Gervais and Other Poems

Perhaps it is the fear of that strange hour when guns
shall cease,
And he no longer master of the earth before his horde,
Now fears to suffer quartering, their cultured taste
to appease,
He flees—'tis all he knows, this shadowy fallen lord.

Oh, leave him to oblivion's care, and let him seek a
pit,
But keep him from the hangman's rope, for only
there he'll find
That blackness which he seeks; to seek the dark,
but bound to sit
Within its reach, O, let him live, for death would be
but kind.

Yes, let him live, this fleeing, shadowy form, his end
will come,
And God may judge with sterner hand, and justice
better mete
Than we, who in our passion would dispatch this
being from
His misery and in our frenzy God's own way defeat!



THE MAID'S LAMENT

LOVE can die—fair Love is dead!
Who wrote the tale which I have read,
That Love from Dionysus born
From Aphrodite took his form?

O what a tale for aching heart,
What bitter iron to make it smart,
When Gods in love together lie,
Their offspring as we mortals die.

Why sing of fickle mortal love?
More constant is the cooing dove,
E'er faithful is his single mate,
Though death the pair doth separate.

Put up within these charnel walls,
A doom upon my spirit falls,
And in this prison must abide,
Nor to the world its pain confide.

Who loves not is too quick to speak,
Assuming gentle airs and meek,
While love in hearts must dormant lie,
Or wakening, go its way to die.

Yet heart of lover is aware
That blooming flower is more fair
Than seedling or a slip of rose,
Though death doth soon upon it close.



IN PÉRE LACHAISE

There is a tomb the history of whose dead is forgotten.

T*HY* children wept when thou wast borne
Into this vaulted sepulchre, their grave
In turn to be; but now none even mourn
For loss of them or thee; no hands now lay
A flower upon the altar in the vault
Wherein thy children used to come whilst years
Sped quickly on. 'Tis not the fault
Of man thy name no longer lives; our tears
Are shed a petty hour, perhaps a day,
A month, or we may think on thee
Perchance a year—but laying thee away,
We lay aside our thoughts, we see
Thee now and then with that cold dread
Wherewith thou once didst think upon the dead.

The iron door which once was black and neat
Is rusting on its hinge, and swings no more,
The wreath and cross and iron seat
Are bent, and rusted to the core.



In vain the letters o'er the door
Against the inclement rain held sway,
Thy name I now can read no more;
And now the darkness or the day
On earth, as in thy tomb, holds thee
In utter blackness, and from men are gone
All traces of thy work; they neither see
A record of thy suffering nor thy wrong.
How vainly do we leave an open door
Between the grave and earth, when life is o'er.



ALONE—ONLY A STUDENT'S LIGHT

A *LONE*—only a student's light,
And the awful midnight hour,
Stillness of a deep cold night,
And the bells in a weary tower
Tolling, tolling—"This day's strife
Is but the measure of a life".

Why this weariness,—why this learning,—
Why these books? If only sadness
Is the fruit of all discerning;
If no word to bring me gladness
Can be found within these pages,
Then how foolish are the sages!

Books of learning, 'tis not they
Turn this midnight into day—
Called I to my heart, "Be still!",
'Twould not answer to my will,
Yet I will not—let it yearn,
Through the midnight let it burn.



FRIENDSHIP

For H. N.

WHEREIN is true friendship felt to touch the
heart

With that warm comfort, which the smart
Of adverse fortune makes us feel so doubly kind—
When to the vistas of the future we are blind,
And all our hopes are wrapped in blackness of the
night,
There comes an aid, a balm of Gilead, gives us sight
Of God, and strength to watch the sun arise,
To see again that dawn when it will beam from clear
blue skies.



UPON THE RETURN OF CERTAIN GIFTS

A YEAR ago my heart was leaping,
Beating with unbounded joy,
Pain of ages by me sweeping,
Seeking distance to destroy.

O that waters had been stronger,
O that time in passing longer,
Leaving me at least to grope
For that for which 'tis vain to hope.

For in that hope was all my youth,
Was all my fond belief in love,
Was faith that those who hold to truth,
May by their faith the world move.

Sometimes I grasp at what about me
Seems to be the thing I crave,
As a man who from the high sea,
By a straw his life would save.



But the years when life and hope
Were the blessings free to me,
When the whole world was my scope,
Were the years I gave to thee.

And these years once given away,
Now my life must ever lack,
Love and faith and spirits gay,
Not as silver gifts come back.



To.....

TIS good in semi-wakefulness to lie,
And see thee pass before my conscious eye,
And reveling in raptures of what seems,
I build the castle of my dreams.

So thus may I for hours see thee smile,
And thus a single night of years beguile;
Or may I see thine eyes so bright,
And feast upon their lustre through the night.

Or may my heart with longing burn
To hear thy voice and to thy side return;
Then with my heart so filled with pain,
My being seeks infinitude again.

And with my soul thus gone upon its quest,
My body lies a-quiet seeking rest;
And o'er me, through the hours, creep
The blessed fairy-gifts of quiet sleep.



SILENCE

MONTHS pass which in the passing seem like
years,

Each day an effort new or cause for tears
Which burn the eye and erstwhile end the sight,
Burn slowly and consume the soul contrite:
For burdens of the world and not its own
In that degree, but from sorrows sown
By other hands, reaps on in stupor dumb,
Seeing all, knowing the while the day will come
When slumber, not an overwhelming grief,
Will bring to it the freedom of relief
From silence, greater pain than which is none—
To feel the sorrow, know the pain, alone—
To suffer it alone, accept the pain
In silence and in agonized disdain.



THE REPLY

"*B*E A friend to thee anew",
Love,

**If I could know thee true—
How can I know this too,
Love,
Not from thy fancy grew?**

**Or even know thy heart,
Love,
Is firmer than before—
Then might I risk the smart,
Love,
Of a breaking heart once more.**



TO ANY FRIEND

COME for a moment into fairyland,
Forget your age, and take my hand
Whilst we on the acropolis stand

Which overlooks the island in the sea Aegean,
And let there come unto our ears that paeon
Sweetly sung, enchantingly Orphean.

But briefly, for the hours are few,
Which in their flight still hold you,
Impatient for a world and vista new.

Trace through the shadows of the placid trees,
Unmoved by voices which melt the magic breeze
That comes to us from o'er the ancient seas

Which lie beyond, trace the silhouettes
Of forms which glide like Grecian frets
About a column.

Here no regrets,



St. Gervais and Other Poems

Nor idle, melancholic gloom makes us despair
Of yesterdays, nor does a silly care
Of what the morrow brings fill the scented air;

But from the motion of those fairy sprites
Who in their dance sing songs for Orphic rites,
Comes ecstasy in which the soul delights.

So dance and sing for me those hours always,
When through the very haze of life, our ways
God granted one, though short and few the days.



SONNET—OSCAR WILDE

WHAT constellation destines the soul born
Beneath its light, to sadness and to pain,
No matter from what mother's womb 'tis torn,
No matter in what cradle it has lain?
For from that cradle it must walk with shame
At last into a grave of sad repose,
Without solace, knowing that it came
Into the world to be the butt of blows
And buffets of this earth, to act the shows
The which to see then fills its mind with hate,
Until into its own life this hate grows
For things which to undo 'tis now too late:
Destined by his birth his art to give,
Destined by these stars in pain to live.



NATURE'S WAY

LET me lie 'neath the underbrush,
Beside a laughing stream,
And hear the note of warbling thrush,
And close my eyes and dream.

For men are sad and Nature's gay,
And I will follow Nature's way.

Let me lie and kiss the stream,
And drink its nectar in,
Let the sun upon me beam,
And wash me clean of sin.

Though men are weary, Nature's gay,
And I will follow Nature's way.

Let me lie and feel the wind
That whispers through the trees,
And let my aching spirit find
Fair music in the breeze.

For men do sigh while Nature's gay,
But I will follow Nature's way.